

# The Rhetoric of Exemplary Governance in ‘Ali Naqi Kamarahi’s *Himam al-thawāqib*<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Scholars interested in Safavid religious and intellectual history have mainly concentrated on the sociopolitical roles of Safavid religious scholars and their doctrinal positions, generating a wealth of information on the various functions of Shi‘i ‘ulama in politics and religio-cultural spheres. However, there is a dearth of research on Safavid ‘ulama’s political thought and theories, despite the extensive body of Safavid advice literature centered on the question of ideal governance, which increasingly preoccupied Shi‘i scholars during the last century of Safavid rule (1501–1722). Consequently, a number of prominent Safavid scholars produced important works in the genre of Perso–Islamic

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<sup>1</sup>I am honored to contribute to a volume celebrating the outstanding career of a scholar whose vigorous and meticulous approach to research continues to profoundly inspire my intellectual pursuits.

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advice literature.<sup>2</sup> For example, ‘Izz al-Din ‘Ali Naqī Tughā’i Kamarahi Farahani (d. 1650) and Muhammad Baqir Khurasani, more commonly known as Muhaqqiq-i Sabzawari (d. 1679)—both of whom served as *shaykh al-Islam* (the foremost religious and legal authority) of Isfahan during the reign of ‘Abbas II (d. 1666)—each wrote such works. During the same era, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hasib ‘Alawi ‘Amili (d. 1709) wrote his *Qawā’id al-salātīn*, which he dedicated to Shah Sulayman (d. 1694).<sup>3</sup>

This paper analyzes the political ideas of *Shaykh al-Islam* Kamarahi as expressed in his works, particularly in his *Himam al-thawāqib* (lit. *Piercing Determinations*) and *Jāmi‘-i Safavī* (*Safavid Compendium*). Kamarahi’s political writings, especially his *Himam al-thawāqib*, present an important link between changing appropriations of ancient ideals of governance—including monarchical authority as the protector of “right religion” and the concept of justice—with a special emphasis on Shi‘i doctrines. Furthermore, because of its focus on religious and political matters, Kamarahi’s political theology enables us to explore the relationship between historical Shi‘i exemplars (i.e., the imams) and practical advice written for rulers. His political works also reveal how Kamarahi’s discourse departs from traditional Perso-Islamic advice literature through its development of a new model of exemplary Shi‘i governance.

### Kamarahi’s Life and Works

‘Ali Naqī Kamarahi was one of the leading religious scholars in seventeenth-century Iran. Iman Quli Khan, the powerful and wealthy governor of Fars, appointed Kamarahi as the judge of Shiraz.<sup>4</sup> It seems,

<sup>2</sup>*Akhlāq-i Mansurī* by Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Dashtaki Shirazi (d. 1542), the famed philosopher and religious scholar, is one of the earliest advice manuals of the Safavid era. Although Dashtaki disagreed with Jalal al-din Davani (d. 1512) on several issues, he formulated his ethical and political theory based on Davani’s philosophical and mystical approach. For more information, see *Akhlāq-i manṣūrī*, ed. ‘Ali Muhammad Pushtdar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1386/2007–8).

<sup>3</sup>Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hasib ‘Alawi ‘Amili, *Qawā’id al-Salāṭīn*, ed. Rasul Ja‘fariyan (Tehran: Kitabkhaneh; Muzeh va Markaz-i Asnad-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Islami, 2005).

<sup>4</sup>This prominent figure of the Safavid era was murdered by Shah Safi. In the Safavid historical

however, that he held this position for only a short while, perhaps up until the murder of Iman Quli Khan in 1633. In his *Himam al-thawāqib* (written in 1634), Kamarahi reports that “currently in the city of knowledge and virtue [i.e., Shiraz] some unqualified person serves as the chief judge.”<sup>5</sup> He most probably continued to live in Shiraz until 1645, when the well-respected administrator and scholar Sayyid ‘Ala al-Din Husayn (d. 1653)—better known as Khalifa Sultan or Sultan al-‘Ulama, the grand vizier of ‘Abbas II—invited Kamarahi to move to Isfahan and assume the post of *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan during the reign of ‘Abbas II.<sup>6</sup>

We might assume that holding such important positions would guarantee long entries in biographical dictionaries and lengthy reports in historical sources, but there is a paucity of information on Kamarahi’s life and career in Safavid chronicles and bibliographical sources. Safavid biographical dictionaries provide only brief information about his scholarly output and family. In his *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’* va *ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā’*, Mirza ‘Abdullah Afandī (d. 1718) includes a rather long entry on Kamarahi; however, as I will explain presently, he is more interested in one of Kamarahi’s works, called *Risāla fī ḥurmat shurb al-tutun* (*On the Prohibition of Tobacco*), than in his life and career.<sup>7</sup> He practically summarizes this treatise. On Kamarahi’s life, he writes:

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texts, Iman Quli Khan is remembered as *Amir al-umara’* (commander in chief) and *Begler Beg* (governor) of all areas of Fars, Lar, Kuḡiluyeh, Shamil, Mina, and Bahrain, some parts of Khuzestan such as Huveyzeh and Duraq, as well as of Golpayegan, Sarkan, and Mahallat.

<sup>5</sup>‘Ali Naqi Kamarahi, *Himam al-thawāqib*, 1634, 11. (All translations throughout the paper are mine unless otherwise stated.) I have been able to find two manuscripts of *Himam al-thawāqib*. The one that I refer to in my paper is the manuscript that I had initially learned about. It is currently kept in the library of Tehran’s Ayatollah Motahhari University (previously the Sipahsalar Madrassa), MS no. 161. I recently found another manuscript that is kept in Tehran’s Kitāb-khana-yi Majlis (MS no. 5363). I have prepared a critical edition of Kamarahi’s *Himam al-thawāqib*. It is forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup>For more on this, see Vali Quli Shamlu, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, ed. Hasan Sadat Naseri (Tehran: Sazman-i Chap va Intisharat-i Vizarat-i Farhang va Irshad-i Islami, 1371/1992), 295–96; see also ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Isa Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’* wa-*ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā*, vol. 4 (Qum: Maktabat al-Ayatollah Mar‘ashi, 1981), 336–37.

<sup>7</sup>For more information on Kamarahi’s thought about the forbidden pleasures of drinking coffee and smoking tobacco, see Rudi Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Washington, DC: Mage, 2005), 69, 85.

He was a very knowledgeable pious scholar, steadfast in religion, a poet, jurist, and a Hadith transmitter. [He was] venerable, devout, ascetic, pious, pure, as his name [Naqi]. We have mentioned the name of his father which I saw somewhere, but [this is what] I found at the beginning of his treatise *Huduth-i 'ālam* [where he gives his name as follows] 'Ali bin Ya'la bin Abi al-'Ala al-Kamarahi. And he, may God have mercy on him, hailed from the Kamara district of Farahan. Then the venerable ruler of Fars, Imam Quli Khan, during the reign of Sultan Shah Safi Safavi, invited him to Shiraz and made him a judge there. [Later when] the great vizier Khalifa Sultan became a grand vizier to Sultan Shah 'Abbas II, he asked him to move from Shiraz to Isfahan, after the dismissal of Mirza Qazi, the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan. He held this position until he died in 1060 [1650].<sup>8</sup>

Afandi then lists Kamarahi's works. It is here that he pays particular attention to the *Risāla fī ḥurmat shurb al-tutun*. He supplements the listed works by adding the following biographical details: "His children and grandchildren have lived and are living in Shiraz and Isfahan, and some of them were alive during his life and some died [while he was alive]. He was originally from Kamara (from Mahal Farahan) and therefore, in addition to his surnames of Shirazi and Isfahani, he is known as Farahani Kamarahi. He was one of the students of Sayyid Majid Bahrani in Shiraz."<sup>9</sup>

Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn al-'Amili, commonly known as al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1693), also provides a very brief account of Kamarahi's life. He writes: "He was a great mujtahid who authored

<sup>8</sup>Afandi, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, 271–73. In his *Tārīkh-i Fārsnāmah-i Nāsirī*, Hasan Fasa'i (d. 1822) praises him as the chief justice (*qadi al-quḍat*), guardian of religious rulings, and knowledgeable in principal and ancillary matters. Hasan ibn Hasan Fasa'i, *Tārīkh-i Fārsnāmah-i Nāsirī*, vol. 2, ed. Mansur Rustagar Fasa'i (Tehran: Intisharat-i Kitabkhaneh-i Sana'i), 1147.

<sup>9</sup>Afandi, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, 273–76. In his *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid* treatise, Kamarahi reports that he has received *ijazas* (licenses to issue fatwas or transmit Hadiths) from Shaykh Baha'i, Majid Bahrani, and Mir Damad. For more, see 'Ali Naqi Kamarahi, *Risāla dar Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid dar 'asr-i ghaybat*, ed. Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Mutallibi, in *Mīrāth-i Islāmi-i Iran*, vol. 6, ed. Rasul J'afarian (Qom: n.p., 1994–99), 399–430, reference on pp. 429–30.

several books. He was the judge of Shiraz and died in our time.”<sup>10</sup> Aqa Buzurg Tehrani (d. 1970), the famed Shi‘i scholar and biographer, reports: “Kamarahi had a son named Baha’ al-Din Muhammad who wrote a book titled *Ithbāt al-raj‘a* (*Proof of Return*)—the manuscript in his handwriting has survived from 1085 [1674]. He [Baha’ al-Din] was one of the students of Agha Husayn Khvansari [d. 1098/1686] and some of Khvansari’s works are scripted by Baha’ al-Din Muhammad Tughā’i. He died in Isfahan sometime after the death of ‘Ali Naqi [Kamarahi]. He was a student of ‘Ali Reza Shaykh al-Islam.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the available literature on Kamarahi’s life and career fails to furnish us with information on his achievements and consequential decisions as the judge of Shiraz and more importantly as the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, Kamarahi’s own books reveal a man who desired to exercise authority and aspired to be heard by the Safavid court. When he served as the judge of Shiraz, he produced several works formulating his theological, doctrinal, and political thoughts. In his works, he emphasized the importance of the Shi‘i tradition and its guardian—namely, the Mujtahid of the Age—by re-invoking his authority and expertise in order to maintain the solidarity and stability of Safavid society as well as its religious strength. He thus reconstructed and conceptualized Shi‘i historical and religious narratives in light of the exigencies of his time. Kamarahi’s representation of Shi‘ism was a far cry from the Qizilbash’s understanding of Shi‘ism, which was a syncretic combination of Sufism and extreme Shi‘ism.<sup>12</sup>

Among his works are *Masār al-Shī‘a* (*The Shi‘a Path*), which contains his proofs and arguments that Shi‘ism is the saved sect (*firqa-yi najiya*). Apart from this work, which remains in manuscript format, he has

<sup>10</sup>Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-‘Amili, *Amal al-‘Āmil*, vol. 2, ed. Ahmad Husayni (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1983), 208.

<sup>11</sup>Aqa Buzurg Tehrani, *Dhar‘ah ilā taṣānīf al-Shī‘ah* (Beirut: Dar-al-Adwa’, 1983), 1:92; 6:192.

<sup>12</sup>The Qizilbash, the Turkish Sufi warriors, who were instrumental in the rise of the Safavid Empire, and consequently gained many military and administrative powers during the first century of the Safavid reign, had lost their prominent position at the Safavid court by the beginning of the seventeenth century. For more, see Rudolph (Rudi) Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 29–30, 39–40.

several other titles, including the aforementioned *Risāla fī ḥurmat shurb al-tutun* and *Risāla fī huduth al-‘ālam* (*On the Creation of the Cosmos*). In addition to these works, which are not directly concerned with his political theology, Kamarahi produced at least four works that are of great interest regarding his political thought.<sup>13</sup>

Kamarahi’s short epistle *Ithbāt-i Luzum-i wujud-i mujtahid dar ‘asr-i ghaybat* (*The Necessity of the Existence of a Mujtahid during the Greater Occultation*) is a brief but particularly important work that deals with the rights and duties of mujtahids during the Greater Occultation of the Twelfth Imam.<sup>14</sup> His *Risāla fī hurma al-salāt al-jum‘a* (*On the Prohibition against Performing the Friday Prayer [in the Absence of the Twelfth Imam]*) and his *Jāmi‘-i Safavī* yield additional insight on Kamarahi’s political views. Kamarahi wrote his *Jāmi‘-i Safavī* on the Imamate in response to Nuh al-Afandi (d. 1660), the Ottoman mufti who issued a fatwa in 1638 allowing the killing of the Shi‘a during the siege of Baghdad.<sup>15</sup> Finally, there is Kamarahi’s *Himam al-thawāqib*, which contains his advice for Shah Safi (d. 1642) as well as his criticisms of the Safavid shah’s religious policies. He wrote *Himam al-thawāqib* six years after Shah Safi had assumed power. One of the existing manuscripts of *Himam al-thawāqib* (MS no. 161) currently kept in the library of Ayatollah Motahhari University (previously the Sipahsalar Madrasa, Tehran)<sup>16</sup> and another manuscript kept in the Kitab-khana-yi Majlis (Tehran) are copies of the original manuscript of *Himam al-thawāqib*, which Kamarahi wrote in 1634.<sup>17</sup>

*Himam al-thawāqib* has a clear framework: it is divided into several chapters (*fasl*). Each chapter is dedicated to various topics, such as the virtues of the Shi‘a, and why they are the saved sect. Additional chapters

<sup>13</sup>For a complete list of Kamarahi’s works, see Rasul Ja‘fariyan, “Andisheh-ha-yi yik ‘alim-i Shi‘i dar dowlat-i Safavi (Ayatollah ‘Ali Naqi Kamarahi),” Hawzah.Net, hawzah.net/fa/Article/View/88042/22%20آیه-الله-علی-نقی-کمره-ای-22%20دولت-صفوی-در-عالم-شیعی (accessed on 17 October 2021).

<sup>14</sup>A manuscript of this treatise (no. 2813) is kept in the library of Majlis, Tehran.

<sup>15</sup>A manuscript of *Jāmi‘-i Safavī* is held in the library of the Astan-i Quds in Mashhad (no. 9773).

<sup>16</sup>For more on this manuscript, see Tehrani, *al-Shī‘ah*, 25:243.

<sup>17</sup>The handwriting for both manuscripts is clear, and the text is free of spelling or grammatical mistakes, thus suggesting that they were copied by skilled scribes.

focus on topics such as the virtues of knowledge and the learned class, the duties of the shah and 'ulama, the twelve qualifications and attributions of an ideal judge, characteristics of unjust rulers (*taghut*), and the consequences of Shah Safi's negligence in seeking the counsel of 'ulama.<sup>18</sup> There is also a short section concerning the financial well-being of the 'ulama. He urges the shah to demonstrate his piety and generosity by relieving the 'ulama from their financial burdens, including Kamarahi himself, who was overburdened by a hefty debt.<sup>19</sup> Kamarahi persuades his readers by means of a sequenced argument; he develops each point through the extrapolation of copious and varied numbers of Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, and sayings of the imams instead of drawing examples from ancient Iranian political practice and traditions. He also pays no attention to Plato's and Aristotle's ethical and political works.

*Himam al-thawāqib* starts with a very brief doxology. It opens with the standard statement of praise for God, Prophet Muhammad, and his family. Kamarahi, after briefly praising Shah Safi's virtues, addresses the shah and reminds him of his duty, which is to protect and defend the Shi'a and banish the infidels in the absence of the Twelfth Imam. One of the main redeeming characteristics of Shah Safi was his *nasab* (lineage) to Imam Musa al-Kazim. The emphasis on his noble lineage is used to legitimize the shah's rule.<sup>20</sup>

After this short preamble, Kamarahi goes on to urge the shah to seek the counsel of the most pious and knowledgeable mujtahid of his realm, for if the shah errs, it is the consequence of evil counsel.<sup>21</sup> He thus advises the shah to seek

the companionship of the knowledgeable who remembers God Almighty.<sup>22</sup> The wise are bestowed by this knowledge; hence the

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<sup>18</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 9–10, 32.

<sup>19</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 84–86.

<sup>20</sup>Ali Naqi Kamarahi, *Jāmi'-i Safavī*, 2, 3, 7, 8.

<sup>21</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 3.

<sup>22</sup>To Kamarahi, someone who remembers God is someone who has made a choice, the choice to exercise his faith, follow God's leading, obey His Word, and do what is right and pleases God.

ignorant should seek knowledge through them. [In this way], divine mercy is expected to encompass both of them. The shadow of divine mercy, which the wise ones attain may extend to the ignorant as well. [Seeking] the companionship of an ignorant who ignores God Almighty, makes the wise useless, and adds to the ignorance of the ignorant. The ignorant, who ignores God and avoids true knowledge through the company of the knowledgeable, becomes the subject of God's punishment.<sup>23</sup>

As is evident from the above-mentioned passage, Kamarahi confers the protection of divine mercy to the 'ulama by virtue of their knowledge of divine laws. In many counsel manuals, including *Siyāsāt nāmeḥ* (*The Book of Government; or Rules for King*) by Nizam al-Mulk Tusi (d. 1092) and *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (also known as *Lavāmi 'al-ishrāq fī makārim al-akhlāq*) by the scholar and political theorist Jalal al-Din Muhammad Davani (d. 1512), the rulers are, however, praised as the shadow of God, the caliph of God, and reflections of the heavenly order.<sup>24</sup>

Due to its distinctive structure and contents, *Himam al-thawāqib* might not initially appear to belong to the literary genre of advice literature or mirrors for princes, because it lacks some elements of conventional counsel manuals and mirrors for princes, which normally address themes concerned with the art of diplomatic and virtuous kingship. Absent from Kamarahi's work are the usual medieval mirrors' accounts

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In other words, he is faithful and God fearing.

<sup>23</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 6. Here, Kamarahi appears to be offering the shah direct advice and indirect criticisms, even though his life and fortune depended on the shah's favor and support.

<sup>24</sup>For more on these important political manuals, see Said Amir Arjomand's work wherein he maintains that "in Sassanian literature the ruler also appears as the 'shadow of God on earth.' Nizam al-Mulk and then al-Ghazālī used these terms to legitimate rulership within the temporal sphere. Nizām al-Mulk in his *Siyāsāt nāmeḥ* incorporates the theory of divine effulgence to the point that it even replaces the classical theory of the caliphate." Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 94. He also quotes Jalal al-Din Davani, who held that "The sovereign is a person distinguished by divine support so that he might lead individual men to perfection and order their affairs [. . .] Such a person is truly the shadow of God, the caliph of God, and the deputy of the Prophet" (Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 97).

of the qualifications and job descriptions of most important officials at court, such as the grand vizier, envoys, scribes, army commanders, and governors. Also missing from Kamarahi's book is the trope of the "circle of justice," which is quite prevalent in classical advice literature as well as in works by Muhaqqiq-i Sabzawari and Muhammad 'Abd al-Hasib 'Alawi 'Amili.<sup>25</sup>

*Himam al-thawāqib*, however, was written for a ruler and was dedicated to him, with its main theme being the description of an ideal ruler and his comportment. Indeed, if we define the genre as works containing ethical advice to rulers about the appropriate conduct and virtues of a ruler, then *Himam al-thawāqib* fits neatly within the genre of advice literature. Kamarahi presents himself as striving to guide Shah Safi wisely to help him discriminate between the beneficial and the harmful so that political stability can be ensured and religious laws implemented properly.

In principle, this book demonstrates how a leading religious scholar responded to specific historical moments and reveals the character and exigencies of relationships between political elites and religious authorities during the first half of seventeenth-century Persia.<sup>26</sup> The most

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<sup>25</sup>For a full discussion of the circle of justice, see Linda T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2013). See also her article "The Vicegerent of God, from Him We Expect Rain: The Incorporation of the Pre-Islamic State in Early Islamic Political Culture," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, no. 3 (2014): 407–29, reference on pp. 407–8. Darling argues that "certain political values that developed in pre-Islamic times remained part of political culture in the Islamic period. The concepts encapsulated in the Circle of Justice originated with the Sumerians much earlier than is commonly believed, and, far from their being Persian in origin, the Persians were slow to adopt or express them" (Darling, "Vicegerent of God," 428). For more information on the circle of justice, see the excellent works of Jennifer London, "The 'Circle of Justice,'" *History of Political Thought* 32 (2011): 425–37, and Louis Marlow, "Mirrors for Princes," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kali, Devin J. Stewart, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Mahan Mirza (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 348–50.

<sup>26</sup>That said, *Himam al-thawāqib*, akin to other counsel manuals, contains advice on ethical and religious considerations which were supposed to inspire a ruler in his policies and conduct. Hence, we might argue that it reflects a theoretical rather than a practical state of affairs. *Himam al-thawāqib* nonetheless offers valuable material on the organization and working of the court under Shah Safi and his governors, including some detailed analyses of the administrative, judicial, and economic institutions.

striking feature of the book's contents is Kamarahi's emphasis on the supremacy of Twelver Shi'ism and especially the dominating position accorded to the Mujtahid of the Age as an influence that should wholly pervade the ruler's ways of thought, governmental policies, and attitude toward his subjects and almost every other matter. *Himam al-thawāqib* is indeed a counsel manual, and a study of the metamorphosis of religious authority into ambitious political aspirations.<sup>27</sup> Unlike conventional counsel manuals, whose authors usually offer only implicit and muted criticism of the political elite that they normally dedicate their books to, Kamarahi explicitly criticizes a reigning monarch by pointing to his failure and encouraging him to act as an ideal Shi'i ruler. For example, he criticizes Shah Safi for appointing scholars who have not yet reached the level of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in legal matters) as qadis (judges), *shaykhs al-Islam*, *mutavallis* (trustees of pious endowments [waqfs]), and other important offices, while ignoring qualified scholars such as Kamarahi. He reports that the Safavid court also "undermines the authority of the appointed 'ulama and allows government officials to interfere with their decisions and curbs their freedom to address religious issues among people so that order can be restored across the realm and signs of his justice, the foundation of the longevity of his rule, can be demonstrated as well."<sup>28</sup>

*Himam al-thawāqib* also portrays a period of profound intellectual and religious confrontations, and a royal desire for some fundamental transformations, only a part of which have been explored by some scholars based in Iran.<sup>29</sup> Kamarahi reports that Shah Safi commissioned

<sup>27</sup>After all, Shi'ism had begun as a dissident position on the political issue of the succession of Prophet Muhammad. It evolved in time into a full religious tradition, and Shi'i Muslims distinguished themselves from the Sunnis by developing their own theology, jurisprudence, and sacred history while weathering schisms and theological disputes that resulted in numerous distinct interpretations of the imams' teachings. It seems that Shi'i scholars such as Kamarahi had a claim on political matters.

<sup>28</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 178.

<sup>29</sup>Ja'fariyan, "Andisheh-ha-yi yik"; 'Ali Khaleghi, *Andisheh-yi siyāsī-i 'Alī Naqī Kamarahī va Fāzīl Hindī* (Qom: Bustan-i kitab, 1388/2009); and Muhammad 'Ali Ranjbar and Insiya Sadat Husayni Sharif in their excellent paper "Ta'āmul-i Dīn va dowlat dar dowa-yi Shah Safi: Nimuneh-yi pazhuhi 'Alī Naqī Kamarahī (953-1060/ 1546-1650)," in *Fasl-nāme-yi pazhuhihā-yi Tārīkhī Dānishgāh-i Isfahan* (Isfahan: University of Isfahan, 1395/2016), 95–110, represent some of Kamarahi's political thought.

Mulla Sadra (d. 1645) to translate Abu Hamid Ghazali's (d. 1111) *al-Ihyā' 'ulum al-dīn* into Persian.<sup>30</sup> He believes that this royal undertaking is a waste of funds and effort "because *-Ihyā'* is unacceptable to the Shi'i 'ulama and is one of the misleading books; hence it should not be translated and copied."<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Kamarahi is unhappy that Shah Safi appointed to an important post in Shiraz a person whose scholarly credentials are lacking and—even worse—who has Sunni tendencies. He writes: "Outwardly he pretends to be a Shi'i while in his heart, certainly he is a follower of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. He had confirmed one of the fatwas of Abu Hanifa (d. 767),<sup>32</sup> and also had written a commentary on the Qur'an using the undotted letters of the Arabic alphabet."<sup>33</sup> Kamarahi also accuses him of being a follower of Abu 'l-Fazl al-'Allami (d. 1602), the famed Mughal historian, and the chief secretary of Emperor Jalal al-Din Akbar (d. 1605). He claims that Abu 'l-Fazl wrote a book to challenge the Qur'an wherein he denied the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad and held that the Qur'an is not divine.<sup>34</sup>

If *Himam al-thawāqib* had confined its attention merely to the moral and religious dimensions of royal misconduct, it would be a largely unremarkable work, noteworthy perhaps only for its conscious extension of the shah's responsibilities to the religious class. But Kamarahi's criticisms of Shah Safi's religious initiatives and tendencies give *Himam*

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<sup>30</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 31.

<sup>31</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 36.

<sup>32</sup>Kamarahi expresses a marked dislike toward Abu Hanifa (d. 767), whose school is sometimes erroneously denounced as the school of *ra'y* (independent opinion), as opposed to that of authoritative tradition. Kamarahi's intense criticism of Abu Hanifa is perhaps due to Abu Hanifa's somewhat rationalist approach to Islamic law and his reserve about traditions that were not highly authenticated.

<sup>33</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 13, 60, 101–11. Apparently, it was Fayzi, Abu 'l-Fazl's brother who, in addition to an extensive collection of Persian odes and lyrics, was also noted for composing two works in Arabic using only undotted letters: a lengthy Qur'an commentary titled *Sawati' al-ilham* and an explanation of prophetic sayings called *Mawārid al-kalim*. For more on him, see Carl W. Ernst, "Fayzi's Illuminationist Interpretation of Vedānta: The Shariq Al-Ma'rifa," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30 (2010): 356–64.

<sup>34</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 77, 82, 85, 101–16.

*al-thawāqib* a more temporal orientation, especially concerning religious discourse in mid-seventeenth-century Persia.

We might conclude that the Safavid court celebrated Kamarahi's works by appointing him the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan in 1645. That said, while his scholarly offerings might have contributed to this appointment, it cannot be firmly established. The author's aspirations in *Himam al-thawāqib* and his other works are, however, evident. Whatever his worldly ambitions, Kamarahi's aims and hopes were to influence Shah Safi's religio-political policies and acts; hence, he genuinely wished to reconstruct some elements and practices at the Safavid court and thought himself the best candidate to execute those amendments.

### Kamarahi's Utopian Scheme

Kamarahi's political thought centers on the principle of the Imamate and the duties of the Twelfth Imam's deputies, the Mujtahids of the Age. He reasons that only the imams—and during the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, the most knowledgeable scholar of each era (*mujtahid-i zamān*)—are the legitimate successors (*wasi*) of the Prophet.<sup>35</sup> Kamarahi insists that, for the Shi'a, "Imamate and political power do not mean kingship, governance and dominance. Imamate is the fruit of prophecy. Prophecy is the essence [matter] and imamate is the form; therefore, as the essence without form does not exist [. . .] prophecy without imamate is fruitless and cannot exist."<sup>36</sup> He goes on to assert that, without the imams and their deputies, divine laws cannot be elucidated and implemented, and for this reason, people are always in need of mujtahids.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>A view also held by Va'iz Kashifi (d. 1494/95), who, in his *Akhlāq-i Muhsinī*, considers the ruler as the protector of religion, with the imams and their deputies charged with the responsibility to safeguard religion (Ann Lambton, "Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship," *Studia Islamica*, no. 17 [1962]: 91–119, reference on pp. 116–17). For more on Va'iz Kashifi, see Maria E. Subtelny, "A Late Medieval Persian *Summa* on Ethics: Kashifi's *Akhlāq-i Muhsinī*," *Iranian Studies* 36 (2003): 601–14. She holds that Kashifi's *Akhlāq-i Muhsinī* was not appreciated greatly "due in large part to the Shi'ite bias of the early Safavids." However, "later Safavid rulers patronized lavish copies of the copy made for the royal library of Shah 'Abbas II (between 1642–66)." (Subtelny, "Late Medieval Persian *Summa*," 613.)

<sup>36</sup>Kamarahi, *Jāmi' -i Safavī*, 80.

<sup>37</sup>Kamarahi, *Jāmi' -i Safavī*, 80–81.

Since the early days of Islamic history, the Shi‘a had maintained that, while Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet of God, the imams were his rightful successors, endowed with special knowledge and infallibility.<sup>38</sup> Kamarahi asserts that “the leader and chief of Muslims must have knowledge of both worldly and religious sciences including religious rulings, politics, protocols and [must be] capable of defeating enemies and so forth.”<sup>39</sup> Historically, the Shi‘a’s ideal governance never materialized except for the short tumultuous rule of ‘Ali (656–61). Consequently, the Shi‘a either had to perform taqiya (concealing one’s belief/religious quietism) or establish a Shi‘i dominion. The Isma‘ili Fatimids and the Safavids are the prime examples of the latter approach. The advent of the Safavid Dynasty, which declared Twelver Shi‘ism the official religion of their realm, excited some Shi‘i scholars but also raised major questions and concerns for others. During the first millennium of Islamic history, the Twelver Shi‘a generally considered the institution of the caliphate a deviation and a sign of defying the

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<sup>38</sup>One of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad often quoted by Shi‘i sources states: “I and ‘Alī are of one light. God created my spirit and the spirit of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib two thousand years before He created humankind.” For more, see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi‘ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 30. Najm al-Din Razi (d. 1256), the great Sufi master, also believed that “the greatest good was achieved when the kingship of faith and the kingship of the world were united in one person.” For more on his political views, see Ann K. S. Lambton, “Quis Custodiet Custodes? Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government (Conclusion),” *Studia Islamica*, no. 6 (1956): 110–15; and Lambton, “Justice.” Historically, however, the Imamate went into several crises due to the imam’s dying without naming a successor. For more information on this, see Said Amir Arjomand, “The Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shiism: A Sociohistorical Perspective,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 491–515.

<sup>39</sup>Kamarahi, *Jāmi‘-i Safavī*, 12. He repeats the same notion again on pp. 42 and 43. Indeed, later generations of Shi‘i scholars held that, during the absence of the rightful imam, namely the Mahdi, a person who is just and well-versed in Shi‘i laws and doctrines must lead the Shi‘a. As discussed by Abdul-Hadi Hairi, some of the mujtahids—including Shaykh Ja‘far al-Najafi, known as Kashif al-Ghita‘ (d. 1812); Mirza Abu al-Qasim, known as Mirza-yi Qomi (d. 1816); Mulla Ahmad Naraqi (d. 1829); and Sayyid Ja‘far Kashifi (d. 1850)—came to the conclusion that politics and rulership were also to be entrusted to the mujtahids as the general agents of the Twelfth Imam. For more on this, see Abdul-Hadi Hairi, “The Legitimacy of the Early Qajar Rule as Viewed by the Shi‘i Religious Leaders,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1988): 271–86, reference on p. 278.

wishes of Prophet Muhammad who, according to the Shi'a, nominated 'Ali to be his successor. Hence, they viewed the so-called rightly guided caliphs as usurpers and likewise dismissed whoever had held political office since the time of Prophet Muhammad as *taghut*, the Qur'anic term for false gods or idols, which also applied to tyrannical and oppressive rulers.<sup>40</sup>

With the rise of the Safavids who bestowed their patronage upon the Shi'a clergy, scholars of Shi'ism had to decide whether the Safavid shahs were just and legitimate rulers deserving of official cooperation between religious scholars and the court. The answers to these questions resulted in a set of different opinions among the jurists, which were articulated in manuals on issues such as *kharaj* (land tax), the permissibility of performing the Friday prayer in the absence of the Twelfth Imam, and the extensive body of the Safavid advice literature. In fact, throughout Islamic history, the *intizar* tenet (waiting for the Mahdi to return and fill the whole world with justice) has been a source of both Shi'i religious quietism and opposition. It led to the rejection of upholding some rituals and practices in the Mahdi's absence. For instance, some Shi'i scholars forbade the upholding of the Friday prayers and the calling for jihad during the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. Those were considered the imam's prerogatives.<sup>41</sup>

As noted earlier, Kamarahi himself wrote an epistle on the prohibition of performing the Friday prayer during the absence of the Mahdi. Yet he argued that it was not only permissible but also necessary to support a Shi'i government so that the 'ulama could fulfill their religious duty of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong (*Amr bi al-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*).<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the relationship between the

<sup>40</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 9.

<sup>41</sup>For more on the nature and scope of the 'ulama's authority, see Liyakat Takim, "From Partial to Complete: Juristic Authority in Twelver Shi'ism," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 4 (2020): 6–27. See also Ann Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory; The Jurists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 42.

<sup>42</sup>Kamarahi, *Jāmi' -i Safavi*, 9. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Abd-al-'Ali al-Karaki (d. 1534) held the same view. For more on Karaki's views, see Maryam Moazzen, *Formation of a Religious Landscape: Shi'i Higher Learning in Safavid Iran* (Leiden: Brill: 2018), 21.

‘ulama and temporal power became a major concern for Kamarahi. It is a theme that runs throughout *Himam al-thawāqib* and his other writings. In fact, this not only constitutes the core of Kamarahi’s theory of ideal governance, but is also the main issue that shaped the conflict between religious and temporal power during Safavid rule, though not always with the same level of intensity that we see in Kamarahi’s political works.

Kamarahi maintains that although Shah Safi is a legitimate, just ruler by virtue of him being a descendant of Imam Musa al-Kazim (d. 799), the shah is nevertheless a nonreligious figure and thus ignorant of God’s laws. Accordingly, he argues that the coercive power of divine law ought to be held exclusively by the Twelfth Imam, plus the Mujtahid of the Age as his rightful deputy.<sup>43</sup> Many Shi‘i scholars including Kamarahi substantiated their argument on the right of the Mujtahid of the Age as the proper executer of religious laws based on a Hadith known as *Maqbūla-yi ‘Umar b. Ḥanzala*, which appears in all of the four canonical Shi‘i Hadith collections.<sup>44</sup> ‘Umar b. Hanzala asked Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (d. 765) about the judicial authority to whom the Shi‘a should refer and also how the conflicting Hadiths should be reconciled or preferred over one another. The Hadith appears in *al-Kāfī* by Abu Ja‘far Muhammad b. Ya‘qub Kulayni-i Razi (d. 941) on the authority of ‘Umar b. Hanzala, who asked Abu ‘Abdullah (i.e., Imam al-Sadiq) the following question:

If two men from among our companions had a dispute over debt or inheritance, could they go to the sultan and the judges [the sultan appointed]? He said: Whoever refers to him [the sultan] regarding the claims of right or wrong, has in fact counseled *taghut* [i.e., the unjust ruler] [. . .] I asked: What should they do then? He said:

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<sup>43</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 7, 9.

<sup>44</sup>This Hadith is generally considered an authentic and accepted (*maqbūla*) saying, and it appears in all of the four canonical Shi‘i Hadith collections by Kulayni-i Razi (d. 941); Abu Ja‘far Muhammad Qomi, better known as Shaykh-i Saduq (d. 991); and Muhammad b. Hasan, better known as Shaykh-i Tusi and Shaykh al-Ta‘ifa (d. 1067), even though there is no information on ‘Umar b. Hanzala in the early *Rijāl* books, which has led some scholars to cast doubt about the authenticity of this Hadith.

They should seek advice of someone who narrated our Hadith and studied our lawful and forbidden and knew our rulings. If he gives a verdict according to our ruling, it should be accepted from him. For I have made him a judge over you. When he judges by our rulings, and if it is not accepted from him, [whoever ignores his ruling], they undoubtedly disregarded God's ruling and turned their backs on us, and whoever turns his back on us, turns his back on God, and this is tantamount to polytheism.<sup>45</sup>

However, for Kamarahi there is no escaping from the historical reality that Shah Safi exercises temporal rulership and influences religious appointments.<sup>46</sup> Hence, he argues that it was God's command for people to have a ruler as stated in the Qur'anic verse wherein God orders the believers to "you who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, he submits himself to temporal power, but insists that the shah recognize and appoint the most knowledgeable scholars to judicial positions and other important religious offices.<sup>48</sup> Kamarahi also stipulates the authority of a king and maintains that obedience to the king has its limits; more specifically, it should not transgress Islamic law, and since a temporal ruler lacks full knowledge of Islamic laws, he must be guided and assisted by the Mujtahid of the Age. In his treatise *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, Kamarahi argues that a Shi'i community is well governed when a just and prudent ruler collaborates with a mujtahid. He goes on to claim that an exemplary shah will use his temporal power to secure and strengthen right governance with the help of knowledgeable mujtahids.<sup>49</sup>

Kamarahi suggests that the religious class be given freedom to thoroughly act upon their religious convictions. But in the absence of such an ideal

<sup>45</sup>Kamarahi, *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, 411; and Kamarahi, *Himam*, 9.

<sup>46</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 115, 119.

<sup>47</sup>Qur'an 4:59 in M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an: English Translation and Parallel Arabic Text*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>48</sup>Kamarahi, *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, 424. He repeats the same notion on pp. 426 and 428.

<sup>49</sup>Kamarahi, *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, 428.

condition, Kamarahi emphasizes that the shah, at least, should exhibit his subordination to the mujtahids in matters of religion.<sup>50</sup> He firmly believes that temporal authority should ideally have nothing to do with the principles and tenets of faith; its role in the religious sphere must be constrained to protecting Shi'ism from the "corrupt heretical doctrines" which threaten Islam and Shi'ism with ruin.<sup>51</sup> However, according to Kamarahi, Shah Safi is failing the task by appointing scholars who have not yet reached the level of *ijtihad* to important religious offices.

Hence, in addition to criticizing political elites, Kamarahi blames the court-appointed religious officials of his day because, in his opinion, they are doing practically the opposite of what is contained in the imami teachings and the divine commandments by trading their piety for worldly ranks and possessions.<sup>52</sup> For this reason, Kamarahi also considers it necessary that, at least in an ideal state, the Mujtahid of the Age be consulted regarding which persons should be appointed as judges, *shaykhs al-Islam*, and so forth. In this way, religious authorities can advance the consolidation of religious authority and temporal power through increasingly integrated administrative mechanisms. Together, they can lead the people and entire political realm to peace and harmony by implementing religious laws and eliminating the infidels. If the ruler adheres to these priorities, he will be rewarded by God in the hereafter.<sup>53</sup>

However, according to Kamarahi's complaints, Shah Safi has thoroughly ignored the example set by his forefathers, especially Shah Tahmasp (d. 1576). Indeed, *Himam al-thawāqib* chronicles a struggle between temporal and religious power that climaxed especially after the death of Mir Muhammad Baqir Astarabadi, known as Mir Damad (d. 1632). During the early years of his reign, Shah Safi respected the 'ulama and enjoyed the company of Mir Damad; he generously supported religious

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<sup>50</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 35.

<sup>51</sup>Kamarahi, *Jāmi' -i Safavī*, 13–14; and Kamarahi, *Himam*, 80, 93.

<sup>52</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 171–74; and Kamarahi, *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, 415.

<sup>53</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 13.

causes, according to Safavid historians.<sup>54</sup> As his reign progressed, a number of factors contributed to the atmosphere of disenchantment among the *shari* 'a-minded clerics such as Kamarahi with the Safavid court. Above all, Kamarahi attributes the prevailing strife and existing discord of his time to a remiss shah and the unjust appropriation of duties by unqualified persons. Indeed, he accuses the shah not only of failing to advance Shi'ism, but also of trying to promote Sunnism and even advance religiously innovative notions.<sup>55</sup> The consequences of the shah's conduct for Kamarahi are not merely confined to the court or power struggle between rival clergy. He is concerned that the immediate effect of Shah Safi's actions, including his support of notions of religious toleration and inclusivity, is to diminish the prestige of Shi'ism and Shi'i 'ulama.

Throughout *Himam al-thawāqib*, we find a fervent and unrelenting doctrinaire in Kamarahi: he strives to apply his exclusive and narrow religious views on nonreligious matters, and in the fashion of all ideologues, he accepts no deviation from the truth of his religious convictions. Hence, he adamantly denounces whomever he regards as deviationists or defectors. In this practice of denouncement, he differs from prudential thinkers such as Muhaqqiq Sabzawari, the author of the most celebrated Safavid advice manual, called *Rowzat al-anvār-i 'Abbāsī* (*Abbas's Garden of Lights*); Sabzawari is aware of the fact that human institutions are perpetually imperfect and that uncompromising and aggressive "righteousness" in politics will always end in political conflict and social breakdown.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Husayni-i Tafrishi reported that "all the sayyids, nobles and religious scholars attended the coronation of Safi. Mirza Habibullah b. Mir Sayyid Husayn Karaki fastened the sword of Isma'il I on Shah Safi's waist and Mir Damad delivered the coronation speech in the congressional mosque of Isfahan." Mir Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tafrishi, *Tārīkh-i Shah Safī*, ed. Bahram'nizhad Muhsin (Tehran: Markaz-i Pazuhishi-i Mirath-i Maktub, 1388/2009), 17, 27, 55–56, 150, 237. For more information on Shah Safi's support of religious causes during the early years of his reign, see Shamlu, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 209; and Valeh Qazwini, *Khuld-i barīn: Iraan dar zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī va Shāh 'Abbās-i duvvum: 1038-1071 H.Q.*, ed. Muhammad Riza Nasiri (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafākhir-i Farhangi, 2001), 3–5.

<sup>55</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 37–48; see also Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 147–48, 191.

<sup>56</sup>Some consider this work the most important Shi'i book on the art of governance, but all agree that it is certainly the most important of the so-called *siyast-nameh* texts composed during the Safavid period. The text emphasizes the necessity of political life and then explains the causes

In contrast, Kamarahi sounds like a radical reformer bent on striking down every rival in order to arrive at a Shi'i utopia more swiftly. Indeed, the essence of Kamarahi's political theory may be summarized as follows: if the clergy limit themselves solely to the religious sphere, they miss the chance to prevent evil that surely will become widespread in their absence from the political sphere. Hence, Kamarahi assumes the task of formulating a workable relation with the political establishment so that both parties can achieve what God wants from them: the temporal power defending and promoting the "true faith," while the religious authorities implement God's rulings.<sup>57</sup>

A close reading of *Himam al-thawāqib*, however, reveals that there was no formula for compromise that was acceptable to Shah Safi and the leading religious scholars. Shah Safi did not even bother to pretend to rule or conduct himself according to the instructions of the 'ulama, such as Kamarahi. The shah's attempt to consolidate the royal power may be regarded as an important cause of conflict between the clergy and the state. The accumulation of wealth was in the hands of the office of the *sadr*, who was the most important religious state official and was in charge of managing the properties, finances, and staff of the religious endowments (waqfs). This office seemingly failed to meet the financial needs of religious scholars such as Kamarahi, which was also another cause of discord between the Safavid court and the clergy.<sup>58</sup>

Safavid shahs' emphasis on their divinely ordained rule could have been also another cause of friction. Safavid monarchs, who were praised

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of the decline and survival of political powers. Muhaqqiq Sabzawari maintains that, for a dynasty to thrive and survive, the ruler must maintain a workable and solid relationship with the people of letters (*ahl-i qalam*), who are scholars, jurists, hakims (the sage and the wise), ministers, judges, aristocrats, physicians, astronomers, writers, secretaries, accountants, mystics, and the like. Each of these groups is dealt with in an independent chapter. He also examines the ideal relationship that the shah should maintain with other classes. These classes include swordsmen, merchants, craftsmen, tax collectors, and farmers. For more on his political thought, see Muhammad Baqir (Muhaqqiq) Sabzawari, *Rawzat al-Anvār-i 'Abbāsī: Dar akhlāq va shīvah-yi kishvardārī*, ed. Isma'il Changizi Ardahani (Tehran: Mirath-i Maktub 'ulum va-Ma'arif-i Islami Ayina-i Mirath, 1998).

<sup>57</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 125–29.

<sup>58</sup>Kamarahi, *Himam*, 160–65, 171–3. See also Ranjbar and Husayni Sharif, "Ta'ām-ul-i Dīn va dowlāt," 105.

often as the shadow of God on Earth, perhaps deemed their power and authority sanctioned by God, and naturally, the final judgment for their actions was to God alone and not to the clergy and the mujtahids as the deputies of the Twelfth Imam.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, regarding any failures or misdeeds, Shah Safi deemed himself accountable only to God. Kamarahi's works, on the other hand, endorse a reciprocal process: from his perspective as a prominent Shi'i scholar, Safavid rulers should not simply adopt the previously recommended or accepted Islamic or Persian political theories and traditions.<sup>60</sup> Instead, they should follow and accommodate a vision of kingship prescribed by the Shi'i mujtahids, in which qualified mujtahids must bridle royal independence and discourage the shah or members of his administration from breaching Islamic laws.<sup>61</sup>

Kamarahi, therefore, refused to separate ideal governance from faith.<sup>62</sup> For him, Safavid rule was a just governance only when it was oriented toward implementing divine laws. In other words, Kamarahi insisted upon some sort of an equilibrium between temporal power and religious authority: ideally, the focus of the ruling authority on every matter, and especially on religious matters, should be developed under the Mujtahid of the Age's guidance. There was, for Kamarahi, an intimate link between justice and religious righteousness. Indeed, Kamarahi's utopia could materialize only if the ruling monarch employed all tools at his disposal with the aim of creating structures promoting Shi'ism

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<sup>59</sup>In *The Millennial Sovereign*, Azfar Moin argues that Timurid and subsequent Mughal and Safavid claims to a sacral mode of kingship were based on a ruler successfully "pouring himself" into preexisting "mythic molds [. . .] shaped by collective imagination and social memory": "the hero, the saint, and the messiah" (A. A. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* [New York: Columbia University Press: 2012], 54).

<sup>60</sup>Historical sources written during his reign reveal that Shah Safi claimed that he would not allow the mighty to oppress the weak, or overtax the peasantry and force them to flee, or squander the treasury on palaces or irrigation works, but would treat his distant subjects equally. See, for example, Muhammad Ma'sum Khvajagi Isfahani, *Khulāṣat al-Siyar: Tārīkh-i rūzgār-i Shāh Ṣafī Ṣafavī*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: 'Ilmi, 1989), 39–40; Husayni Tafrihi, *Tārīkh-i Shah Safi*, 236–38; and Valeh Qazwini, *Khuld-i barīn*, 39, 84, 95.

<sup>61</sup>Kamarahi, *Ithbāt-i luzum-i mujtahid*, 415–16; and Kamarahi, *Jāmi'-i Safavī*, 80, 81, 202.

<sup>62</sup>The Shi'i 'ulama's treatment of kingship as well as their cooperating with the political elite was anything but uniform and settled. See Moazzen, *Formation of a Religious Landscape*, 19–23.

protecting the faithful Shi'is. To allow any acts undermining this was an attack on the well-being of the Shi'a. The shah thus played a delicate role in maintaining the structure of reciprocity characterizing the religious order of his realm. If he declined to perform this function, the welfare of the Shi'a community was imperiled. Hence, the more the shah was subjected to God's laws derived from and inspired by Islamic teachings, the more just he was. In contrast, in the case of individuals (e.g., al-Ghazali and Abu 'l-Fazl) or societies (e.g., the Mughal and Ottoman Empires) that did not acknowledge the supremacy of Shi'ism, Kamarahi describes them as unjust and perversely blind to the truth and to their own good.

In Kamarahi's ideal world, temporal rule must be oriented toward religious. He discerned that a deviation was developing during the reign of Shah Safi that was threatening to rupture Shi'ism altogether, hence the authorship of his *Himam al-thawāqib*.

## Conclusion

In his *Himam al-thawāqib*, Kamarehi describes the desirable qualifications that an exemplary Shi'i ruler should possess. He considers Shah Safi a legitimate ruler but a nonreligious figure and thus ignorant of God's laws. Accordingly, Kamarahi argues that the Muḥtāhid of the Age should at least have jurisdiction on religious matters. The shah, however, has perturbed Kamarahi by appointing unqualified persons, some with presumably Sunni inclinations, to important religious positions, and also by showing interest in the works of Ghazali and Abu 'l-Fazl al-'Allami. Kamarahi believes that the development of these "religious ills and deviations" has occurred because of Shah Safi's lack of interest in seeking 'ulama's companionship: a major shortcoming that is not just a moral and political lapse, but a rejection of the Shi'i way of life.

In the political reality of early modern Iran, however, it seemed unavoidable that the highest political office belonged to the Safavid shah despite all his shortcomings. Despite all his criticisms of the reigning monarch of his time, Kamarahi, believes that it is necessary

for government, even if imperfect, to exist so that order is maintained, and every other form of authority must be subordinated to that. That said, Kamarahi's theory does not stop at the total subordination of the clergy to temporal power. Instead, he takes a major step by integrating the clergy into a rather political partnership. Throughout *Himam al-thawāqib*, he emphasizes the importance of Shi'i tradition and 'ulama by re-invoking their authority to maintain the social strength, solidarity, and stability of the Safavid society. To this end, he re-conceptualizes historical and religious narratives in light of the circumstances of his era and deduces that the lack of collaboration between the religious and temporal powers is at the root of all socioreligious ills. He likewise emphasizes his conviction that consultation with the Mujtahid of the Age offers an effective solution to these ills. Mujtahids, it is argued, are the most reliable interpreters of Islamic teachings, knowledge of which is an indispensable requisite for the exercise of a godly and just rule.